

# There's a New 'Marshal' in Town

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Swaggering proudly in his cowboy boots and cowboy hat with his holsters and toy pistols strapped to his waist, the 4-year-old pulled himself up over the counter of the store in Grubs.

"Aren't you the mayor?" he asked the owner. Satisfied that he was talking to the right person, the youngster wanted to know how old he had to be to serve as town marshal.

"Twenty-one," the mayor replied.

"When I'm 21, will you make me the marshal?" the boy asked. The mayor laughed as he made the promise.

Sixteen years later, Sen. Jack Critcher, the former mayor of Grubs, is keeping his promise to L.J. Bryant – sort of.

A sophomore at Hendrix College, Bryant has traded in his cowboy duds for a suit and tie and is serving as special assistant to the senate pro tem.

"I've watched L.J. since he was an itty, bitty fellow," Critcher says. "He was the first one I thought of."

Bryant didn't think twice when the senator made the offer – even though it meant taking a semester off school. He figures this opportunity will be an education in and of itself.

Critcher will make sure it is. "He will be very busy during the session," the Batesville senator says. "He will be wearing two or three hats." Besides serving as Critcher's liaison to the House and doing constituent work, Bryant will be the clerk who punches bill numbers and information into the electronic system in the Senate and tracks the vote tallies.

"He could easily be working some days 12

hours a day," Critcher says.

Bryant is no stranger to hard work – or politics. When he was 14, he ran, unsuccessfully, for president of the Young Democrats. His campaign took him all over the state. And when it came time to put his name on the ballot, it was Critcher who nominated him.

The 19-year-old – he'll be 20 next month – also isn't worried about his youth affecting his job performance. Bryant credits his involvement with career and technical education and service as a national officer and board member for Family, Career and Community

Leaders of America with preparing him early on for the adult world. He says that experience taught him skills he would never have learned in the high school classroom – like how to work with others, especially adult professionals.

Besides, he has a pretty good feel for the job and already knows many of the legislators, thanks to his work on political campaigns.

Bryant has high expectations in his new job. He says he's looking

forward to helping the people back home and gaining a greater understanding of state government. And he hopes he can help other young people understand how much government affects their lives.

Bryant also thinks this experience will help him in the future if he ever runs for office.

Most people who know Bryant think that's more of a *when* than an *if*. "He has a bright future," Critcher says of his special assistant.

"If I ever run," Bryant says, "I hope I do it for the right reasons." For him, that means having a heart for service.

In the meantime, Bryant is happy focusing on learning as much as he can in his new job in the Senate.

